

# WRI 4000: Writing for the Community

## Fall 2023 Course Policies

Section 1 (TR 3:00 PM-4:15 PM, BAC 151)  
3 Units / LJWL Department

**Professor:** *Robbie Maakestad*  
**Office:** *Bond Academic Center, 119*  
**Office Hours:** *[By appointment:  
M/W/F 9-12pm and T/TH 11-12PM]*

**LJWL Office:** *Bond Academic Center*  
**Phone:** 619-849-2437  
**E-Mail:** [rmaakest@pointloma.edu](mailto:rmaakest@pointloma.edu)

### PLNU MISSION

*To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send*

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

WRI 4000 is a course for students interested in writing in the service of the literary community as well as for other communities in which they find themselves interested. As a genre, the essay often operates beyond the traditional bounds of literature, showing up in art, culture, history, sports, food writing, music, film, and so many other fields. The essay is flexible, malleable, and easily able to make such literary intrusions, as well as spanning the breadth of the literary landscape. Poets write essays about poetry; short story writers write essays about fiction; essayists write about anything and everything that interests them. Utilizing research, the essay bridges the gap between literature and other fields, informing the reader while also making an argument.

In this class, we will focus on the primary goal of all advanced writers: to write brilliant, thought-provoking, and memorable essays: the kind that, no matter what the subject, your readers won't be able to stop reading once they start. In doing so, we will write essays in the service of those fields that most interest our individual essayistic aesthetic.

### WRI 4000 LEARNING OUTCOMES

*Students who complete WRI 4000 will be able to:*

1. Identify aspects of writing theory and craft in the works of professional essayists.
2. Analyze written professional and peer compositions to determine efficacy of writers' craft techniques.
3. Apply professional writing techniques, including targeted research, as a strategy to increase reader interest.

4. Craft essays using descriptive and evocative language, scenes, dialogue and other advanced writing conventions.
5. Apply workshop techniques for constructive criticism of peers and in turn take criticism and use it to improve their own work.
6. Format texts in a genre-appropriate and professional manner for submission to workshop and publication.
7. Present written work to live audiences, demonstrating strategies for audience engagement and oral communication.

## DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

In order to best reach our chosen audiences via the craft, terminology, and techniques of creative nonfiction, we will pursue these learning goals:

1. Further our knowledge of both the craft and art of writing creative nonfiction.
2. Gain an understanding of how to apply nonfiction craft elements such as “Eye vs. I,” major dramatic questions, and lyricism.
3. Further an understanding of and ability to utilize general writing craft elements such as point of view, voice, story arc, dialogue, description, and scene/summary.
4. Grow in our knowledge of the way that essays bleed over into the following fields/topics: literature, art, history, culture, sports, film, medicine, and cooking.
5. Endeavor to explain how creative nonfiction works as both readers and writers. By studying literature as a writer—considering it as a craft as well as an art—we will come to a better understanding of what goes into creation of that literature.
6. Work together in small-group workshops, and individually after those workshops, in order to explore and practice the discipline of revision.
7. Practice presenting our work to an audience of readers and of listeners.

Together, these learning goals allow us to see writing as a process of art, craft, and discipline, which will benefit not just our ability to write creatively in this course, but also our ability to meet the creative and critical demands required of us in the future.

## ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Each of you will be responsible for preliminary drafts of writing assignments, written critiques of classmates’ work, various reading and writing exercises that will aid our understanding of the discipline and craft of creative nonfiction, and three finished writing projects: three nonfiction submissions. Class time will be divided accordingly: lecture and discussion, small group discussion, in-class writing, and workshop.

## ASSIGNMENTS

- Literature and Writing Essay Submission – 200 points (100 points are Critical Analysis)
- True Crime/Sports/Art Essay Submission – 200 points (100 points are Critical Analysis)
- Medicine/History/Science and Ecology/Place and History/Film/Food/Music Essay Submission – 200 points (100 points are Critical Analysis)
- Craft Moves – 190 points (10 points per class period)
- Workshop Participation and Peer Critiques (25 points per workshop day) – 150 points
- Essay Presentation – 30 points, presentation + 30 points, written component – 60 points

**TOTAL = 1000 points**

## REQUIRED TEXTS

All course readings will be posted to Canvas—you will need to print these out so that you can take notes on them as you read, and then bring the annotated readings with you to class the day they are assigned so that you can access the documents in class during discussion. Taking notes as you read is one of the primary ways to improve your writing.

If you print double-sided, and more than one .pdf page per printed page, this will lower the printing cost for you this semester. I would recommend getting a 3-ring binder to organize your printed essays. Another option would be a digital reader with which you can take notes on the readings.

Please bring a notebook and writing utensil to each class to take notes, as well as the assigned essays that will be discussed for that class period.

**In lieu of a print textbook, please purchase tickets to attend Poetry Day and the two evening Writer's Symposium Events this fall:**

[https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite\\_admin%2Fdefault.aspx](https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite_admin%2Fdefault.aspx)

## GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

### RESPECT

Respect for other students and your instructor in our classroom is essential to a healthy classroom dynamic. We may discuss ideas and concepts that challenge your current thinking, so we all must respect one another and be open to new ideas. Show courtesy to other students and your instructor.

### CANVAS

Throughout this course, students will be required to utilize Canvas receive course grades and access any changes to the *Course Schedule* throughout the semester. If the *Course Schedule* is updated, students will be notified well in advance, but will need to download the updated schedule which the instructor will post on Canvas.

### CANVAS SUPPORT

If you have questions about the content you find in my Canvas course or need clarification on assignment instructions please let me know. If you are unsure how to use any given feature in Canvas you will find the [Canvas Guides](#) to be a very helpful resource. If you cannot access something in my Canvas course or it appears that some part of the course is not working properly, please contact the Office of Instructional Technology for support at [oit@pointloma.edu](mailto:oit@pointloma.edu). Include specific information in the request (course ID, section, assignment or module name, etc.) to expedite the troubleshooting process. Screenshots are super helpful!

### PLNU EMAIL

Students must regularly check their PLNU email for updates on assignments and scheduling.

### TECHNOLOGY

Refrain from using technology during class time unless a classroom activity calls for it to be used. This means cell phones, laptops, iPads, and other electronic devices. Taking notes by hand has been shown to aid long-term comprehension much more so than typing notes, so by all means, *please take handwritten notes* in class. Unauthorized use of technology during class will result in lost participation points.

## **ATTENDANCE & CRAFT MOVES**

In order to learn most affectively and get as much as you can out of this course, I expect regular attendance. Let me know if you do have to miss a class, and we can work something out.

**Attendance is required for workshops. Absences on such days will hurt your workshop grade.** Missed in-class work may not be made up. It is also your responsibility to get workshop drafts to and from those in your group.

Craft moves are worth 190 points (10 points per class period with assigned readings), and should be turned in each class period when readings have been assigned. For every class period, each student will be responsible for writing up, turning in, and sharing 5 craft moves that that they noted from that class period's readings (at least one per essay that we read throughout the semester). A craft move is any writing decision that the writer has made within their essay that we can learn from or analyze. Students should regularly share these craft moves during discussions in order to get the points allotted for that class period. Missed craft moves due to an absence cannot be made up.

## **PLNU ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

## **WORKSHOP**

Workshop participation, feedback, and attendance is mandatory and graded. Throughout the semester we will be reading and critiquing one another's essays as a whole class. You will turn in a typed copy of your critique to me, as well as to the member of your group who is being workshopped (this will affect your participation/workshop grades). Workshop is not a time to disparage or rudely comment on the work of others. Written critiques balance positive and critical comments, though criticism should certainly be constructive and focused on the writing, not on the writer or the writer's ability. If there are problems with feedback you receive, do not hesitate to contact me. Workshop should be a safe space where we work together to better one another's writing; thus, the amount of effort you put into commenting on the work of others should be just as much as you put into producing your own work.

## **SUBJECT MATTER**

This course will ask you to write whatever you want to write about, but do recognize that there is a line between what is appropriate and not appropriate in a classroom setting. I respect your privacy and truly believe that this class should allow you creative freedom, so all I will ask is that you use common sense with regard to what is/is not appropriate to write in an academic

setting. If you are unsure/nervous or have a hunch that something might be questionable, please discuss your ideas with me in advance of bringing them to workshop.

## **CONTENT WARNING**

Each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences which contribute to the way you perceive various types of information. In WRI 4000, all class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, I encourage you to talk to me about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

## **[ONLY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJORS]**

At least one of your creative projects this semester needs to connect topically to environmental concerns.

## **TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS AND DUE DATES**

All **major assignments** must be turned in on Canvas on the day they are due in addition to being printed and turned in hard-copy at class. Assigned work will have a due date and you will be expected to meet this requirement. Missed in-class work may not be made up unless you have an excused absence. I will accept the major projects one class period late, but your paper will be penalized one letter grade (A → B as maximum grade). Major projects turned in after that point will receive a score of 0. You must turn in all four major projects to pass this course. Failure to do so will result in a grade of F.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

## **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) POLICY**

If it is part of your creative process, you are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g, ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski, etc.) in this course, but before you turn in your draft, please speak to me about how you plan to use this tool in your work.

Any work that utilizes AI-based tools must be clearly identified as such, including the specific tool(s) used. For example, if you use ChatGPT, you must cite ChatGPT including the version number, year, month and day of the query and the statement "Generated using OpenAI. <https://chat.openai.com/>."

Further, you must include with your draft the sequential prompts and methodology that you used to generate the creative piece. Failure to indicate AI as part of the work will be considered plagiarism.

It is important that you protect your colleagues' intellectual property. Critiques of your colleagues' works may not be done with the help of AI. Providing AI with samples of your colleagues' works will result in an F in this course.

### **PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY**

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

### **STATE AUTHORIZATION**

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

### **SPIRITUAL CARE**

PLNU strives to be a place where students grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain, or if you have prayer requests, you can contact the [Office of Student Life and Formation](#).

### **PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY**

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center ([EAC@pointloma.edu](mailto:EAC@pointloma.edu) or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan ("AP") to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.

## PERSONAL NEEDS

Counseling is available in the Wellness Center for undergraduate students at PLNU. They are open Monday through Friday during the academic school year to offer morning, afternoon, and evening appointments. Please call (619) 849-2574 to schedule a counseling appointment.

## PREPARATION

You will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss readings, share your work, and comment on other students' work. Being prepared for each class is vital in creating a classroom that is conducive to learning—take notes on the assigned readings as this allows you to remember the material more fully. Back up your written work as you're responsible for turning work in on the due dates. You are also expected to regularly check your PLNU email for updates to the schedule and assignments.

## GRADING RATIONALE

Creative writing is both an art and a craft. While it is debated by many whether art can be graded, craft can be evaluated. In particular I will look for:

- Adherence to and mastery of CNF conventions
- Structure and form as they pertain to CNF subgenre and subject
- Masterful use of narrative voice and point of view
- Engaging employment of language
- Excellence of writing mechanics
- Improvement through revision
- Creativity and innovation within genre conventions

While the above concerns creative work produced in this course, each creative assignment also requires a Critical Analysis component in which you as the artist will critique the decisions that went into your own work, and connect craft decisions you made with those used by the writers of our course readings. These Critical Analyses will be graded not as creative work, but upon the clarity and thoughtfulness of the analysis you craft.

## FINAL EXAMINATION POLICY

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

For this course, the final will be a required in-class reading from your favorite final project revision during the final exam. Our scheduled final exam time is **Thursday, December 14, 4:30-7:00 pm**. Since the final is a class activity, it cannot be rescheduled, so make sure that you will be able to attend.

## LETTER GRADE GUIDELINES

920 - 1000 points A      900 - 919 points A-

880 - 899 points	B+	820 - 879 points	B	800 - 819 points	B-
780 - 799 points	C+	720 - 779 points	C	700 - 719 points	C-
680 - 699 points	D+	620 - 679 points	D	600 - 619 points	D-



## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1 Introduction to Creative Nonfiction and Essays about Literature & Writing**

- 08/29 – Syllabus, Introduction to the Essay, Art and Craft.  
Ander Monson’s “Essay as Hack”  
Mark Slouka’s “Arrow and Wound,” and  
Darcy Gagnon’s “On Cicadas, Silence, and Japanese Poetry”
- 08/31 – Ryan McDonald’s “The Dark All Around Us,”  
Bich Minh Nguyen’s “What Mr. Miyagi Taught Me About Anti-Asian Racism in America,”  
Julien Barnes’s excerpt from “Three Simple Stories,” and  
Katherine D. Morgan’s “On Being Seen By Toni Morrison”

### **Week 2 Essays about Literature & Writing**

- 09/05 – W.G. Sebald’s “Beyle, or Love is a Madness Most Discreet” and  
Nathan Goldman’s “The Power of W.G. Sebald’s Small Silences”

#### **True Crime Essays**

- 09/07 – Joan Didion’s “Some Dreamers of the Golden Dream” and  
Pamela Colloff’s “Unholy Act”

### **Week 3 True Crime Essays**

- 09/12 – Josh Dean’s “The Great Buenos Aires Bank Heist”  
James D. Walsh’s “Dead Wake”

#### **Presentation 1**

#### **Essays about Sports**

- 09/14 – Claudia Rankine’s “The Meaning of Serena Williams: On Tennis and Black Excellence”  
Chris Ames’s “Father Time Is Undefeated”  
Jason Magabo Perez’s “Crayoning the King: On Discipline”

#### **Presentation 2**

#### **Workshop A & B Drafts Due Before Class**

### **Week 4 Essays about Sports**

- 09/19 – W. Todd Kaneko’s “Order of Elimination: Lessons Learned from the WWF Royal Rumble Match” and  
Jon Bois’s “All Is Lost” [for video/GIFs, see link on Canvas]

#### **Workshop 1**

- 09/21 – **Workshop A**  
**Presentation 3**  
**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

### **Week 5 Workshop 1**

09/26 – **Workshop B;**  
**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

**Poetry Day**

09/28 – **Poetry Day Generative Workshop:** Jason Magabo Perez, Fermanian  
Conference Center, 3PM

**& Attend Poetry Day Evening Reading:** 25 Poets to Celebrate 25  
Years, Crill Performance Hall, 7PM

**Buy Free Ticket ASAP:**

**[https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite\\_admin%2Fdefault.aspx](https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite_admin%2Fdefault.aspx)**

**Week 6 Essays about Art**

10/03 – **KATE MERRITT CLASS VISIT—Bring questions to ask**  
Kate Merritt’s “Confessions of a Lapsed Catholic Dancer,”  
Davon Loeb’s “Breakdancing Shaped Who I Am As a Black Man and  
Father,” and  
Albert Goldbarth’s “Fuller”  
**Essay 1 Due in Class and on Canvas**

10/05 – Cassidy Klein’s “Finding Solace in the Pop Art Nun,”  
John D’Agata’s “Collage History of Art, By Henry Darger,” and  
Elvis Bego’s “Ghost Museum”

**Week 7 Essays about Art**

10/10 – Lawrence Weschler’s “Vermeer in Bosnia,”  
Ross Gay’s “Loitering Is Delightful,” and  
Kyoko Mori’s “Repetitions”

**Essays about Place and History**

10/12 – Anna Gazmarian’s “Armenians in Jerusalem,”  
Silas Hansen’s “Fifteen Things I’ve Noticed While Trying to Walk  
10,000 Steps Per Day: Muncie, Indiana Edition,” and  
Amy Kolen’s “Fire”

**Week 8 Essays about Place and History**

10/17 – **RICARDO FRASSO JARAMILLO CLASS VISIT—Bring questions  
to ask**  
Elissa Washuta’s “White City,”  
Ricardo Frasso Jaramillo’s “Omayra (In Other Words)” and  
Sayantani Dasgupta’s “Chernobyl”  
**Workshop A & B Drafts Due Before Class**

**Writer’s Symposium**

**\*\*\*Wednesday 10/18 – Attend Writer’s Symposium Workshop:** Eliza Brazier,  
Fermanian Conference Center, 3PM

**& Attend Writer's Symposium Reading:** Eliza Brazier, Fermanian  
Conference Center, 7PM

**Buy Ticket ASAP:**

[https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite\\_admin%2Fdefault.aspx](https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite_admin%2Fdefault.aspx)

10/19 – **FALL BREAK: NO CLASS**

**Week 9 Essays about Science, Nature, and Ecology**

10/24 – Jen Percy's "I Have No Choice But to Keep Looking,"  
Katherine Schulz's "The Really Big One," and  
Zoë Bossiere's "Necrotizing Fasciitis"

**Workshop 2**

10/26 – **Workshop A**  
**Presentation 4**  
**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

**Week 10 Workshop 2**

10/31 – **Workshop B;**  
**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

**Essays about Food**

11/02 – **ANNELISE JOLLEY CLASS VISIT—Bring questions to ask**  
M. F. K. Fisher's "Foreword," "How to Be Content with Vegetable  
Love," & "Love and Death Among the Molluscs,"  
and Annelise Jolley's "A Feast For Lost Souls"  
**Essay 2 Due Before Class**

**Week 11 Essays about Food**

11/07 – Jaya Saxena's "Just Reading About Four Loko's New 14 Percent ABV  
Seltzer Could Make You Black Out,"  
Geraldine DeRuiter's "Bros., Lecce: We Eat at The Worst Michelin  
Starred Restaurant, Ever," and  
Dave Stroup's "The Gulp War"  
**Presentation 5**

**Writer's Symposium**

11/09 – **Attend Writer's Symposium Workshop:** Davon Loeb, Fermanian  
Conference Center, 3PM

**& Attend Writer's Symposium Reading:** Davon Loeb, Fermanian  
Conference Center, 7PM

**Buy Ticket ASAP:**

[https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite\\_admin%2Fdefault.aspx](https://plnu.universitytickets.com/w/default.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2Fsite_admin%2Fdefault.aspx)

**Week 12 Essays about Film**

11/14 – **SAMUEL ASHWORTH CLASS VISIT—Bring questions to ask**  
Samuel Ashworth’s “In the Dark All Katz Are Grey,”  
Gabrielle Bellot’s “Living in Dread of the Next Name We’ll Chant,” and  
Zadie Smith’s “Killing Orson Welles at Midnight”

**Essays about Music**

11/16 – Lesley Jenike’s “Sweet Bird,”  
Spencer Kornhaber’s “Taylor Swift and the Sad Dads,” and  
Elena Passarello’s “Twinkle, Twinkle, Vogel Staar”  
**Presentation 6**

**Week 13 Essays about Music**

11/21 – Alysia Li Ying Sawchyn’s “Indie Night at the Goth Club,”  
Andre Perry’s “Americana / Dying of Thirst,” and  
Hanif Abdurraqib’s “Chance the Rapper’s Golden Year”

**Written Component of Essay Presentation Due**

**Workshop A & B Drafts Due Before Class**

11/23 – **THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS**

**Week 14 Essays about Music**

11/28 – Joan Didion’s “The White Album”

**Writing Day**

11/30 – **Workshop A**  
**Presentation 7**  
**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

**Week 15 Workshop 3**

12/05 – **Workshop B;**  
**Peer Critiques Due in Class**

12/07 – Writing Day

**Week 16 Final: Reading from Favorite Final Revision**

12/14 – **FINAL EXAM PERIOD: 4:30-7:00 PM: Reading**  
**Essay 3 Due**

\*\* This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. I’ll let you know with plenty of time if changes are made.

\*\* All reading assignments must be read for the day that they appear on the syllabus.